Department of Commerce
Safety Report

August 2003

Introduction

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for August 2003. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in August 2003. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for July 2003, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts.

Section One: Program Initiatives

Appointment of a New Safety Director for the Department:

With the recent departure of Dr. Tony Pierpoint, who was the Department's Director of the Office of Occupational Safety and Health, actions are being finalized to fill this vacancy. Several well qualified candidates responded to a vacancy announcement for this position which was issued in July. Interviews for this position have been completed, and it is expected that a new Safety Director will be appointed within the new few weeks. Many new and innovative safety and health programs were initiated by Dr. Pierpoint, and we expect to continue our progress with these programs, as well as develop new ones.

Section Two: Significant Safety Issues

The use of personal protective equipment, such as face shields, gloves, respirators, safety shoes, hearing protection, hard hats and other such equipment is a proven effective means to prevent many types of injuries and illnesses. Many industrial operations and laboratories in the Department have work processes and utilize equipment which require the use of personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as PPE. In reviewing the Department's accident reports each month, there are usually several injuries which could have been prevented if PPE had been worn. Workplaces, equipment or operations which expose employees to hazards from high noise levels, falling objects, hazardous chemicals, electrical shock, flying particles, sharp objects, and other similar hazards are required by OSHA and Departmental regulations to develop and implement a written PPE program. This program must include an assessment of the hazards which employees may be exposed to, the types of PPE needed to protect employees, training in the use of the PPE, a requirement that PPE must be worn whenever a hazard may be present, and other elements. The OSHA requirements for a PPE program are contained in 29 CFR 1910.132 through 1910.139, and are available on the Internet. To access the OSHA PPE standard go to http://www.osha.gov, click on "Standards" in the Laws and Regulations table, and scroll down to 29 CFR 1910.132.

The use of PPE should be employed if hazards cannot be eliminated by the use of engineering controls. Engineering controls are more effective in controlling hazards than PPE, and are usually less expensive. Some examples of engineering controls would be:

- Installing a barrier with acoustical baffling material around a machine which produces high noise levels instead of issuing hearing protection.

- Placing a flexible duct at the source where the smoke or fumes are generated, such as in a machine shop or laboratory, and exhausting them to the outside instead of implementing a respiratory protection program.

- Placing shields over machines which produce flying chips and particles, sparks and other such eye and face hazards instead of issuing face shields.

- Installing netting on overhead walkways to prevent objects from falling instead of issuing hard hats.

An inspection of your workplace may reveal the need for PPE or the implementation of engineering controls. A few minutes to identify hazards which can be eliminated by the use of PPE or implementing engineering controls may prevent someone from being seriously injured. Safety is everyone's responsibility throughout the Department and we strongly encourage your participation.

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. The information below reflects July 2003 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

Incidence Rate: The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and is calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH}(200,000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year[1]
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

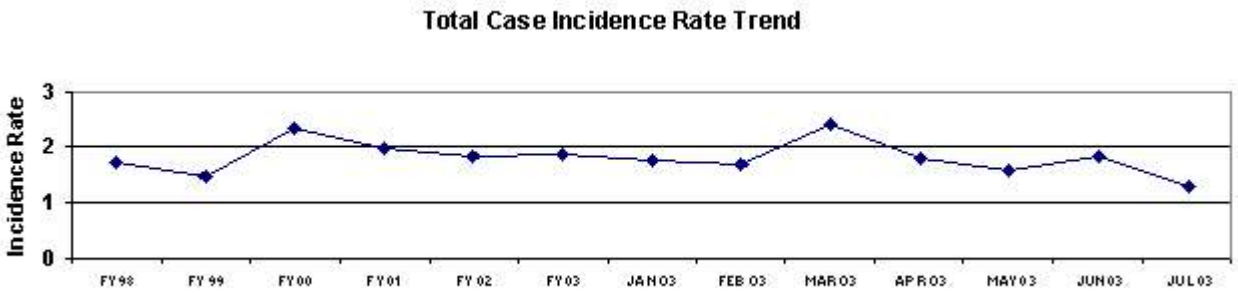
1 The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours.

The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, including those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, the incident rates from those records are not directly comparable to industry trends, since they include many minor injuries and illnesses that are not considered "work-related" under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for private industry. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

NOTE: Previous reports used total injury rates to analyze injury trends. However, as employee awareness increases, as it has at Commerce, and employees are encouraged to report all injuries, rates tend to increase despite improvements in safety. That can occur, because employees are encouraged to report injuries that would not have been reported previously. In that event, injury rates can be deceiving. Therefore, this and subsequent reports will use recordable injury rates to compare injury rates.

Table 1A provides data that more closely corresponds to the recordable injury criteria. The remaining tables and charts include data for all cases submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

Chart 1



Major Findings include:

- **The FY 2003 Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) for Commerce is up slightly from the rate for FY 2002, and is down from FY 2001. The TCIR through July is 1.87**

for FY 2003, 1.84 for FY 2002, and 1.98 for FY 2001. There were several injuries due to work surfaces and equipment not being closed or marked properly. A total of 533 Workers' Compensation claims were submitted thus far for FY 2003.

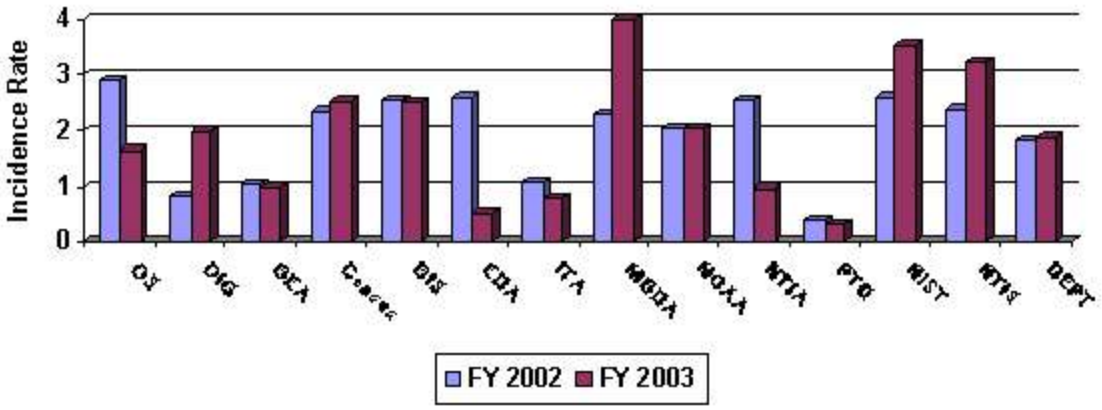
- **Of the larger bureaus, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Bureau of the Census have higher TCIRs through July for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002 (see Table 1 and Chart 2).**

- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), and the National Technical Information Service have significantly lower TCIRs through July for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002.**

The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) for Commerce is down from previous years.

The TRCIRs for Commerce are 1.40 for FY 2003, 1.60 in FY 2002, and 1.72 in FY 2001.

Chart 2



Types of Injuries: Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses is essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 3 and 4, and tables 2 and 2A.

Key findings are explained below:

- **"Exertion" injuries were the most prevalent type of injury in July 2003.** "Exertion" injuries accounted for 20 percent of all injuries within the Department for FY 2002 and for 36 percent in July 2003. Training should be given to employees for the proper technique in lifting and moving objects. Ergonomics assessments should be provided to employees that have jobs that require repetitive motion.

- "**Struck" injuries were second in frequency for July 2003.** These injuries accounted for 14 percent of those reported for FY 2002 and for 22 percent in July 2003. A majority of the injuries were caused when employees struck open drawers or objects that were not flush with the walls or working surfaces. Employees should use caution and be aware of their surroundings.

- **"Slips/Falls" injuries remain a concern.** "Slips/Falls" injuries were 36 percent of all injuries in FY 2002. The numbers have decreased to 20% for July 2003. Many slips/falls are caused by inclement weather. None of the reported slips/falls for July 2003 were caused by the weather or wet floors.

Chart 3

Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for FY-2003

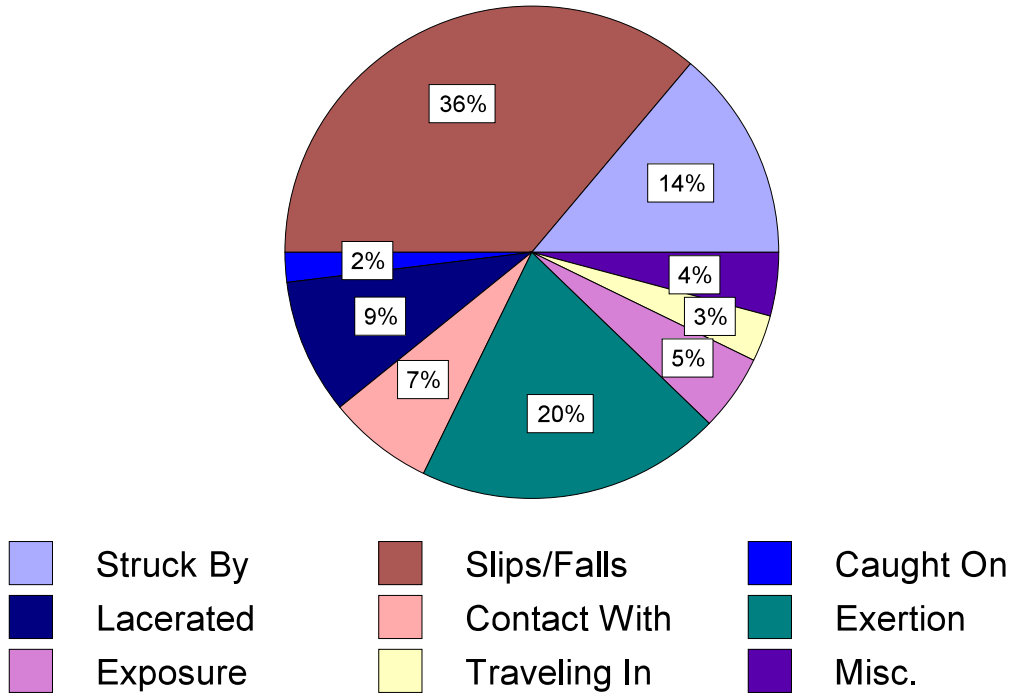


Chart 4

Injury Type as Percentage of Total

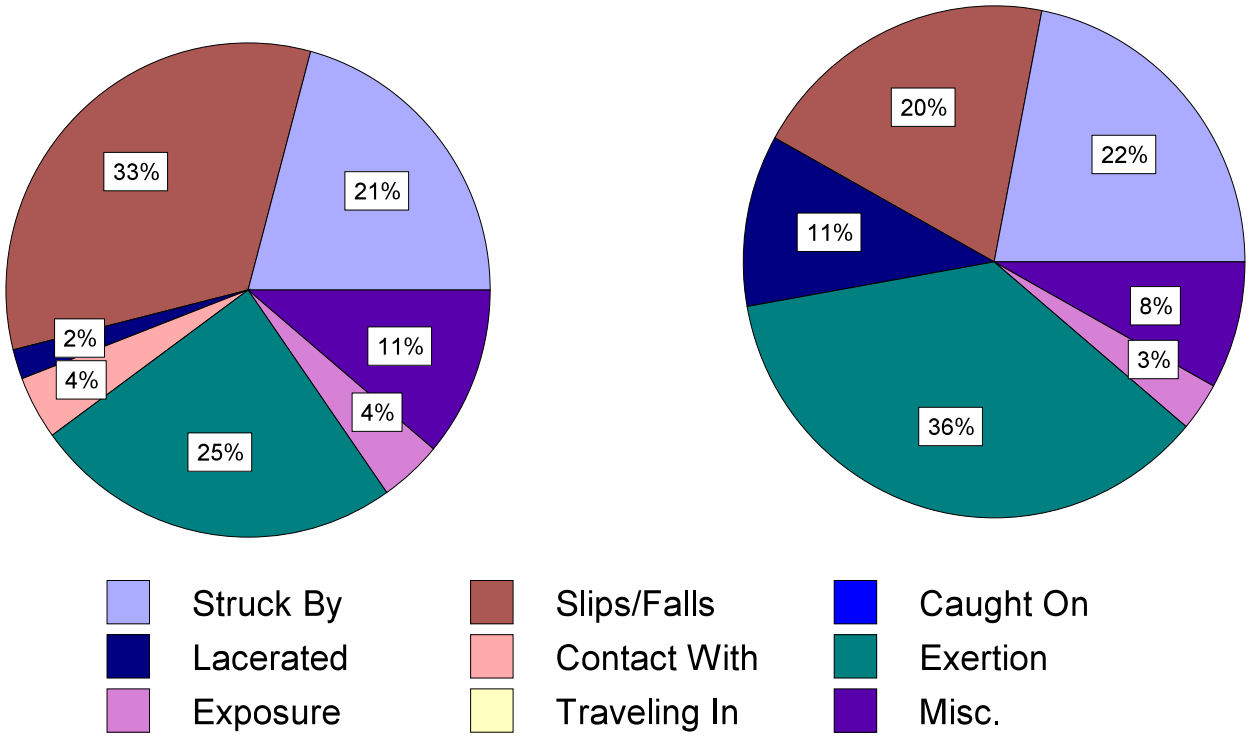


TABLE 1
TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		June 2003		July 2003		FY 2003 (To Date) Actual	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	35	3.94	22	2.47	23	2.88	2	2.97	1	1.49	11	1.64
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	4	2.98	3	2.15	1	0.82	1	9.80	0	0	2	1.98
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.75	4	0.88	1	0.23	5	1.12	4	1.03	0	0	0	0	4	1.00
Bureau of the Census	282	1.34	311	1.04	383	2.83	393	2.41	241	2.33	15	1.83	14	1.72	206	2.53
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.02	11	3.08	15	4.06	9	2.44	9	2.56	0	0	1	3.59	7	2.52
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	9	3.67	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	1	0.53
International Trade Administration	26	1.33	18	0.92	24	1.23	12	0.62	18	1.08	1	0.72	1	0.72	11	0.79
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	3	3.40	4	4.36	2	2.31	1	13.89	0	0	3	4.04
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	307	2.69	247	2.18	228	2.04	22	2.34	11	1.17	191	2.03
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	7	3.03	6	2.55	0	0	1	4.85	2	0.97
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.73	27	0.47	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	3	0.60	0	0	16	0.32
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.51
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.57	84	2.87	79	2.82	68	2.34	76	2.58	7	2.89	7	2.90	78	3.23
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	6	2.61	4	2.15	1	0.52	4	2.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	778	1.73	811	1.48	890	2.34	807	1.98	642	1.84	52	1.82	36	1.27	533	1.87
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

TABLE 1A
TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE*

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		June 2003		July 2003		FY 2003 (To Date) Actual	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	30	3.38	17	1.91	22	2.75	0	0	1	1.49	9	1.34
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	1	0.66	3	2.24	3	2.15	1	0.82	1	9.80	0	0	2	1.98
Bureau of Economic Analysis	7	1.53	4	0.88	0	0	5	1.12	3	0.77	0	0	0	0	3	0.75
Bureau of the Census	244	1.15	288	0.96	345	2.55	332	2.04	212	2.05	13	1.58	12	1.48	145	1.78
Bureau of Industry and Security	8	2.42	10	2.80	13	3.52	8	2.17	9	2.56	0	0	1	3.59	7	2.52
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	8	3.26	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	24	1.23	17	0.86	22	1.13	11	0.57	10	0.60	1	0.72	1	0.72	11	0.79
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	2	2.27	4	4.36	2	2.31	1	13.89	0	0	2	2.69
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	260	2.34	275	2.41	289	2.53	225	1.98	203	1.81	16	1.70	11	1.17	153	1.63
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	5	2.16	3	1.27	0	0	1	4.85	2	0.97
Patent and Trademark Office	35	0.67	26	0.45	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	3	0.60	0	0	16	0.32
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.51
National Institute of Standards and Technology	87	2.96	76	2.60	66	2.36	55	1.89	59	2.00	4	1.65	6	2.48	47	1.95
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	5	2.18	4	2.15	1	0.52	3	1.78	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	694	1.54	732	1.34	809	2.13	702	1.72	557	1.60	39	1.37	33	1.16	398	1.40
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.
** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Reported Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through July 2003)

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against Object	24	29	42	56	27	33	16	8	21	6	4	4	1	1	3	5	2	2	284
Falls/Slips	72	59	50	153	96	83	19	22	20	13	7	8	5	7	6	10	2	2	634
Caught On An Object	4	5	9	9	8	3	1	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	52
Cuts/Bites	20	26	5	36	19	15	12	9	1	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	151
Contact With An Object	13	19	4	24	11	4	1	6	0	6	6	3	1	2	0	1	1	0	102
Exertion/ Motion	64	64	62	54	37	45	7	17	19	3	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	6	387
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	13	9	5	7	6	15	3	3	3	0	1	0	1	6	1	0	12	0	85
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	10	0	10	16	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	43
Miscellaneous*	2	7	14	8	21	8	1	8	7	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	81
TOTAL	216	228	191	357	241	206	60	76	78	31	24	16	10	18	11	22	23	11	1819

*** Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stoke.**

**** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends**

Table 2A

INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through July 2003)

BUREAU	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	15
Falls/Slips	2	0	1	2	2	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	3	1	2	6	0	2	38
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	7
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	3	13
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Miscellaneous *	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
Total	2	1	2	5	4	4	5	6	1	0	0	1	1	4	0	7	6	2	4	2	3	8	9	7	84

*** Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stoke.**